

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 015940
ORIGIN BIB-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-03 /007 R

66011

DRAFTED BY: BIB: WRROBERTS: KLB
APPROVED BY: EUR/EE: CWSCHMIDT
EUR/EE-JSEYMOUR

-----075767 200820Z /14

P 200542Z JAN 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 015940

FOR CSCE DELEGATION

FOLLOWING REPEAT SOFIA 2589 ACTIONSECSTATE INFO BERLIN USBERLIN
BUCHAREST BUDAPEST BONN MOSCOW MUNICH PRAGUE WARSAW DEC 30.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 2589

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PROP, BU

SUBJECT: EVALUATION REPORT OF RADIO FREE EUROPE OUTPUT:
BULGARIA

REF: A) 76 STATE 51717; B) STATE 255535

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY SUBMITS EVALUATION REPORT ON RFE
BROADCASTS TO BULGARIA FOR PERIOD APRIL 1 TO OCTOBER 1,
1977. WITH FEW SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTIONS, EMBASSY FOUND
RFE BROADCASTS TO BULGARIA DURING THAT PERIOD SKILLFULLY
TARGETED IN TERMS OF TOPICS, WELL PREPARED, AND WLL
EXECUTED. BULGARIA CONTINUES TO JAM RFE, BUT JAMMING IS
SUFFICIENTLY LEAKY THAT STATION IS HEARD IN SOFIA AND
ALMOST CERTAINLY IN COUNTRYSIDE ON SOME WAVE LENGTHS.
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END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY BELIEVES RFE'S MOST USEFUL FUNCTION IN ITS
BULGARIAN BORADCASTS IS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON TOPICS NOTED
BELOW, AMONG OTHERS, THAT BULGARIAN MEDIA TREAT ELLIPTICALLY
ON A SELEVITIVE BASIS; IGNORE; OR TOTALLY DISTORT, CONSI-
TENT WITH POLICY, USUALLY BASED ON NEED TO PRAISE PARTY

AND GOVERNMENT OR COVER UP SHORTCOMINGS OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS. TOPICS AND EMBASSY'S COMMENTS ON RFE TREATMENT OF THEM COMPRISE FOLLOWING EIGHT PARAGRAPHS.

3. THE ECONOMY: THE BULGARIAN ECONOMY IS NOT WORKING VERY WELL AND ITS MALFUNCTIONINGS, ON PERSONAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL, ARE PROBABLY BULGARIANS' NUMBER ONE GRIPE. RFE DID WELL WITH THIS THEME. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENT COVERAGE ARE MAY 19 PIECE ON FAILURE OF COORDINATION IN ECONOMIC PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE AND MAY 31 EDITORIAL ON BULGARIAN/ SOVIET ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIP. EMBASSY FOUND SOME ECONOMIC REPORTS UNCLEAR IN THEIR FOCUS, SUCH AS, FOR EXAMPLE, APRIL 26 PIECE ON GOB'S CLAIM OF HAVING RAISED LIVING STANDARDS. (WE WOULD SUGGEST SIMPLER THEMES AND MORE CONCRETE EXAMPLES.) AUGUST 2 PIECE ON SHORTAGE OF COFFEE HOUSES LEFT OUT KEY POINT FOR CONTEMPORARY

SOFIA THAT THERE ARE COFFEE HOUSES, BUT THEY FREQUENTLY HAVE NO COFFEE. EMBASSY FINDS PROBLEMS OF TOURISM (E.G., APRIL 30 PIECE) AN AMBIGUOUS AND THUS SOMEWHAT UNFRUITFUL THEME.

4. INSIDE POLITICS: THRASHINGS AROUND INSIDE THE PARTY ARE NEVER DISCUSSED OR EXPLAINED BY BULGARIAN MEDIA.
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VARIOUS VERSIONS OF WHAT HAPPENED CIRCULATE IN SOFIA, BUT ARE PROBABLY ALMOST COMPLETELY OBSCURED OUTSIDE OF CAPITAL. THUS, EXCELLENT RFE COVERAGE OF SUCH MATTERS AS VELCHEV OUSTER (E.G., MAY 13 EDITORIAL) AND APPARENT REDUCTION OF STATUS OF STANKO TODOROV (JUNE 24 PIECE) ARE OF GREAT INTEREST TO BULGARIANS AND POINT UP TO THEM HOW THEIR POLITICS ARE CONDUCTED BEHIND CLOSED DOORS OR IN CURTAINED MERCEDES. WE DO NOT HAVE IN MIND SPICY GOSSIP.

5. INEQUALITIES OF "REAL SOCIALISM" AS IT IS PRACTICED: BULGARIANS ARE VERY AWARE OF GROWING GAP BETWEEN STANDARDS OF LIVING OF PARTY/GOVERNMENT ELITE AND ORDINARY PEOPLE. RFE COVERAGE EFFECTIVELY DISCUSSED AND DOCUMENTED THIS PHENOMENON DURING EVALUATED PERIOD. EXAMPLES OF GOOD WORK ARE MAY 10 PIECE ON RENTS, SINCE HOUSING IS ONE OF MOST PAINFUL MANIFESTATIONS OF INEQUITY, MAY 25 PIECE ON UNEQUAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES, AND APRIL 24 "MERRY SUNDAY" PIECE ON NEW SOCIALIST MAN.

6. INTERNATIONAL NEWS (OR NO NEWS): BULGARIAN MEDIA ARE CLUMILY SELECTIVE IN THEIR PRESENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS, EVEN WHEN IT HAS A BULGARIAN SLANT TO IT. CONSEQUENTLY,

RFE COVERAGE OF SUCH MATTERS AS SOVIET POLITBURO MANEUVERINGS, A FORBIDDEN TOPIC HERE, SOVIET/CHINESE DEVELOPMENTS, AND WHAT IS ACTUALLY TAKING PLACE AT BELGRADE CSCE CONFERENCE IS VITAL. EMBASSY FOUND IT OF EXCELLENT QUALITY DURING REPORTING PERIOD. ONE ESPECIALLY GOOD EXAMPLE WAS SEPTEMBER 3 PIECE ON UNIVERSIADA GAMES, AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT ACTUALLY HELD IN SOFIA WHICH BULGARIAN MEDIA COVERED SO SELECTIVELY THAT GAMES MIGH HAVE BEEN TAKING PLACE IN TIRANA.

7. CROSS-COUNTRY EASTERN EUROPE AND EUROCOMMUNISM REPORTING: BULGARIAN MEDIA ALSO CAREFULLY SCREEN AND SELECT NEWS FROM OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. RFE FULFILLS A VITAL NEED IN PROVIDING STRAIGHT NEWS ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS THERE, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF SIMILAR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
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SITUATIONS. EMBASSY HAS FOUND RFE REPORTING ON DISSIDENCE IN OTHER EE COUNTRIES EXCELLENT. GOOD EXAMPLE, WITH DIRECT BULGARIAN RELEVANCE, WAS MAY 6 REPORT ON WRITERS' CONFERENCE HELD IN BULGARIA IN JUNE WHICH DEALT WITH EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN CZECH WRITER PAVEL KOHOUT AND GERMAN WRITER PETER WEISS. BULGARIANS ALSO FOLLOW WITH GREAT INTEREST INTERCHANGES BETWEEN EUROCOMMUNISTS AND ADVOCATES OF INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIANISM AND "REAL" SOCIALISM.

8. COUNTER-NEO-HISTORY: ONE OF GOB AND ITS MEDIA'S MOST CHARACTERISTIC AND MOST ANNOYING PRACTICES IS REWRITING OF HISTORY, INCLUDING PROTRAYAL OF SOME OF LEAST SAVOURY EARLIER BCP FIGURES AS NATIONAL SAVIOURS. RFE PERFORMS INVALUABLE FUNCTION IN PRESENTING ALTERNATE ACCOUNT OF WHAT OCCURRED. EXAMPLES OF GOOD RFE WORK IN THIS REGARD INCLUDE SEMERDZHIEV BIOGRAPHIC SKETCHES OF GEORGI DIMITROV, ESPECIALLY APRIL 17 ACCOUNT OF BALKAN FEDERATION QUESTION. THIS TYPE OF BROADCASTING WILL REMAIN IMPORTANT DURING 1978 AS BULGARIA CONTINUES CELEBRATION OF 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF 1877-78 RUSSIAN/TURKISH WAR WHICH LIBERATED BULGARIA. (SEE, FOR EXAMPLE, APRIL 25 REPORT ON RUSSIA'S MOTIVES IN GOING TO WAR.) IT IS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, THAT THIS SORT OF HISTORIC PIECE NOT BE SUBJECT TO BEING PERCEIVED AS MINUTIA OR AS EXILES RUMBLING ON ABOUT THE PAST. (SEPTEMBER 13 PIECE ON DONTCHO KOSTOV, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS SOMEWHAT LESS RELEVANT TO PRESENT EVENTS THAN SOME OTHER REPORTS.)

9. MYTH-PUNCTURING: BULGARIAN MEDIA TEDIOUSLY PROPOUND VARIETY OF MYTHS ABOUT PRESENT-DAY BULGARIA. RFE CAN PUNCH HOLES IN THEM, WITH HUMOR AND WITH FACTS. AN INKIEW PIECE OF MAY 8 CAN BE PLACED NEXT TO BULGARIAN PRESS ACCOUNTS
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OF BULGARIAN EXPATRIATES WHO HAVE FOUND LIFE ABROAD MISERABLE AND LONG TO RETURN. SEPTEMBER 25 PIECE ON SOFIA INTERPARLIAMENTARY UNION CONFERENCE SHOWED CLEARLY MYTH AND REALITY OF FUNCTIONING OF BULGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN THESE TIMES. IT IS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, THAT RFE POSIT ITS CRITICISM ON PERCEPTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY BULGARIANS. EMBASSY STILL BELIEVES THAT RFE HITS RELIGIOUS THEME TOO HARD, CONSIDERING THAT RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS OF MANY YOUNGER BULGARIANS IS LOW. WE BELIEVE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT LINE IN MAY 24 PIECE ABOUT "PROFOUND AND INSEVERABLE BOND BETWEEN CHURCH AND NATION" WOULD JANGLE NERVES OF SOME YOUNGER BULGARIANS. MAY 10 TODOR PAVLOV OBITUARY REFERRED TO "TRADITIONAL ORTHODOX UPBRINGING OF THE BULGARIAN". AS INCREASINGLY LARGER PROPORTION OF BULGARIAN POPULATION SHOWS POST-1944 BIRTHDATE, THIS STATEMENT BECOMES LESS AND LESS TRUE. (EMBASSY WOULD ADD THAT PAVLOV OBITUARY APPROACHED BAD TASTE IN STOMPING ON HIS GRAVE, IN A SENSE.)

10. US/BULGARIAN RELATIONS: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT RFE REPORTING HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE TO SOME DEGREE IN PROVIDING BULGARIANS WITH ACCURATE INFORMATION ON STATE OF RELATIONS. GOOD EXAMPLES ARE MAY 26 STAMMLER/CHARRY INTERVIEW, SHASKO HISTORICAL REPORT OF MAY 19 ON US ATTITUDES TOWARD BULGARIAN LIBERATION, AND JUNE 14 REPORTING ON SIGNING OF CULTURAL AGREEMENT AND VISIT OF BULTURE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ZHIVKOVA TO THE US.

11. ADDITIONAL TOPICS: IF EMBASSY MIGHT SUGGEST POSSIBLE OTHER FRUITFUL TOPICS FOR RFE COVERAGE, WE BELIEVE THAT QUESTION OF ECOLOGY IS ONE THAT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY INTERESTING TO BULGARIANS AND ONE WHERE THEY FEEL THEIR GOVERNMENT IS FAILING THEM BADLY, SACRIFICING THEIR HEALTH TO QUESTIONABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. IN A MORE DELICATE AREA, EMBASSY ALSO BELIEVES THAT MANY BULGARIANS SEVERLY RESENT SYCOPHANTICPOSTURE OF BULGARIAN LEADERSHIP TOWAR THE USSR AND BREZHNEV AND THIS SORE POINT COULD BE PRODDED
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A LITTLE MORE BY RFE WITHOUT LOSING ANYTHING. (EXAMPLES OF REPORTS THAT COULD HAVE DONE WITH A BIT MORE STARCH ARE JUNE 1 AND JUNE 8 REPORTS ON ZHIVKOV'S TRIP TO USSR AND AFTERMATH.)

12. AUDIBILITY: GOB CONTINUES TO JAM RFE. AT SAME TIME, THERE ARE LEAKS IN CURTAIN AND EMBOFFS HAVE RECEIVED RFE

BROADCASTS QUITE CLEARLY IN SOFIA ON OCCASION, INCLUDING KOSTOV BROADCASTS. THIS GOB POLICY IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO CHANGE, DESPITE CSCE OR ANY OTHER FORESEEABLE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.

13. IN CLOSING EMBASSY KNOWS HOW DIFFICULT IT IS BUT BELIEVES THAT RFE SHOULD CONTINUE TO TRY ITS BEST TO REMAIN IN CONTACT WITH BULGARIAN UNDERGROUND HUMOR AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. AS A NEW YEAR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THAT EFFORT, WE PASS ON THAT THE "CH. N. G." OF "CHESTITA NOVA GODINA" (HAPPY NEW YEAR) THIS YEAR IS SAID BY SOFIA WAGS TO STAND FOR "CHAKAME NOVA GAVRA" OR "WE AWAIT A NEW INDIGNITY". GARTHOFF UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SEMIANNUAL REPORTS, RADIO BROADCASTING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE015940
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: BIB: WRROBERTS: KLB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780030-0681
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780139/aaaabgyb.tel
Line Count: 237
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d813c7e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN BIB
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 51717, 77 STATE 255535
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3738214
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EVALUATION REPORT OF RADIO FREE EUROPE OUTPUT: BULGARIA
TAGS: PROP, BU, CZ, RFE
To: BELGRADE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d813c7e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014